

Booy H.S. 17

INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS



A SERIES OF PUBLICA-
TIONS RELATING TO THE
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

VOL. I, No. 2

NEW YORK
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
HEYE FOUNDATION

1919

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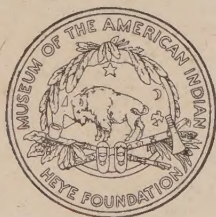
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SANTO DOMINGO
KITCHEN-MIDDEN
AND BURIAL MOUND

BY
THEODOOR DE BOOY

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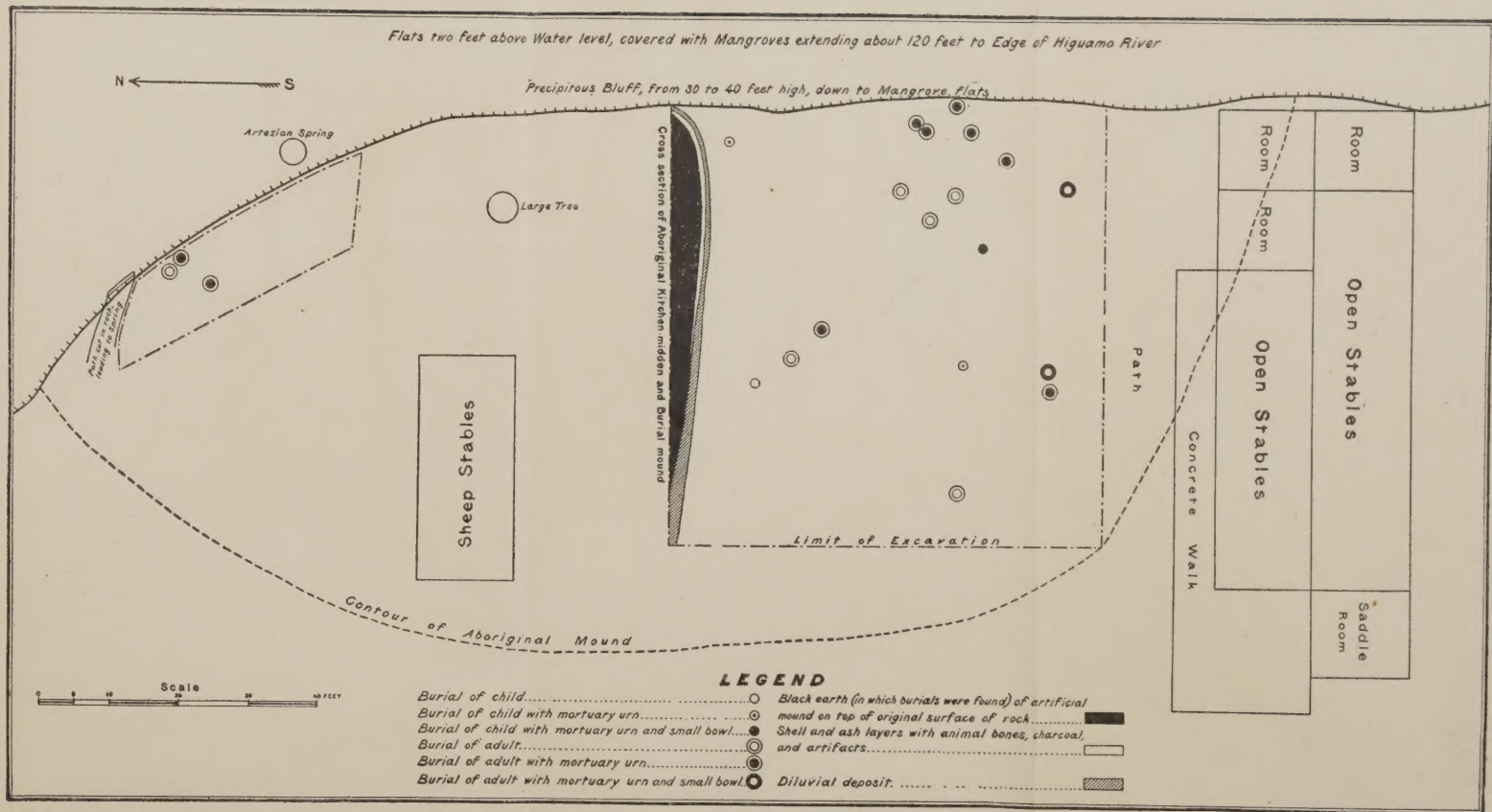
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INDIAN NOTES

I



PLAN OF THE ABORIGINAL MOUND ON INGENIO CRISTOBAL COLÓN, MACORIS, SANTO DOMINGO

SANTO DOMINGO KITCHEN- MIDDEN AND BURIAL- MOUND By THEODOOR DE BOOY INTRODUCTION URING the summer of 1916 the writer was engaged in making an archeological survey of cer- tain districts in the eastern part of the island of Santo Domingo. In 1913 and 1914 he conducted considerable research in the extreme eastern part of the island, but this work had been con- fined chiefly to cave exploration.¹ On this new expedition but little cave work was done, the investigation consisting principally of the excavation of the large mound with which this paper deals. During a former expedition to Santo Domingo the writer had been informed of	
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a large shellheap on the Cristóbal Colón sugar plantation situated on Higuamo river (also known as Macoris river), about three miles above the coast town of San Pedro de Macoris. He was fortunate, therefore, in meeting Mr E. Despaigne, administrator of the Cristóbal Colón estate, and in receiving from this gentleman an invitation to visit the property and to conduct the necessary excavations. Thanks are due to Mrs De Mola and Miss Nariño, of Paris, owners of the estate, to Mr Despaigne, Mr W. Gowrie, assistant administrator, and Mr W. Gowrie jr., civil engineer of Cristóbal Colón, for facilities accorded in the work and for their whole-hearted hospitality. In addition, a large number of specimens were presented to the writer for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, by Mr Despaigne and by various other officials of the estate. By reason of the cordiality of those mentioned the writer regards his sojourn on Cristóbal Colón as one of his most pleasant and profitable experiences in the Antilles.



SECTION OF THE MOUND, SHOWING SHELL DEPOSITS

HIGUAMO RIVER

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THE LOCALITY

Higuamo river has its source about forty miles north of San Pedro de Macoris, and does not become navigable for canoes until it reaches a small settlement called La Paja, about fifteen miles from its mouth. Its two principal tributaries are the Magua and the Casui, but even with these the quantity of fresh water in the river is not sufficient to overcome the tide, hence the stream is brackish for a distance of more than ten miles above its mouth. It must be stated, however, that the Higuamo is excellently adapted to canoe navigation, with its low, shelving banks and a current that presents difficulty only after severe rains. There can be no doubt that fish was found in the Higuamo in large quantities in pre-Columbian times, and the only reason there are practically none today is due to the sugar factories which discharge their surplus molasses and other refuse into the river. The banks of the Higuamo are covered with mangrove trees, and it is

AND MONOGRAPHS

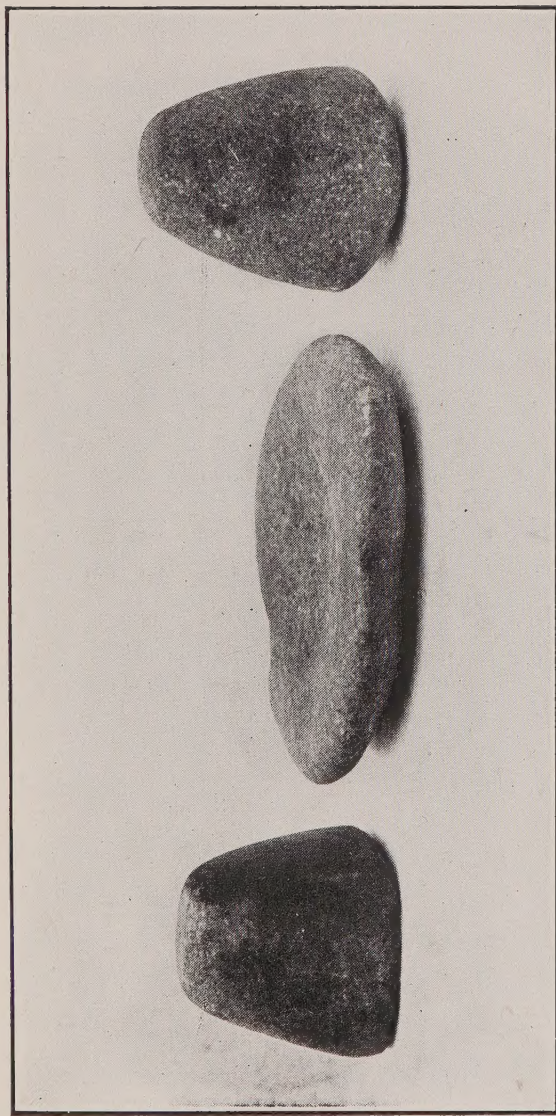
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on the branches of these that the oyster (*Ostrea virginica*) flourishes (fig. 1). The writer wishes to emphasize this fact, as in his investigations he found that the



FIG. 1.—Oysters growing on mangrove trees.

aborigines who inhabited the banks of the Higuamo made these oysters their principal food supply, and that, of the various species of land- and sea-shells found in the kitchen-middens herein described, the shells of this species of oyster predominated.



a

b

c

STONE PESTLES AND SHALLOW MORTAR. HEIGHT OF THE PESTLES (*a*) $3\frac{1}{2}$ IN. AND (*c*) 3 IN. THE DIAMETER OF THE MORTAR IS $5\frac{1}{8}$ IN.

ARCHEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Mr Despaigne gave information of a large shellheap a short distance north of the stables of the Cristóbal Colón estate, and it is of this shellheap that the pres-

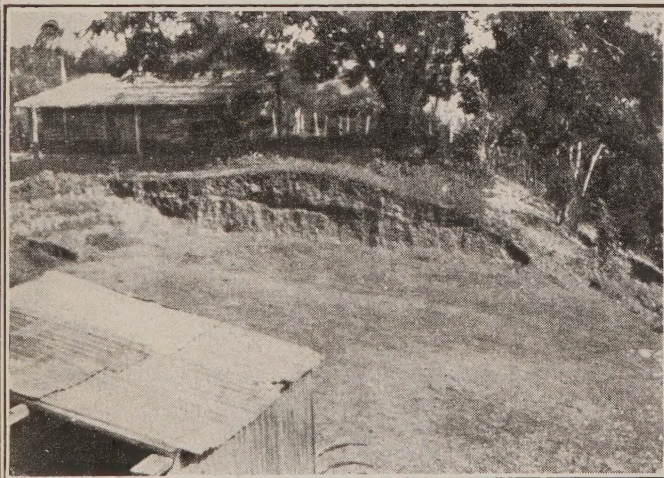


FIG. 2.—The mound after having been partially leveled.

ent paper treats. The mound (figs. 2-4) stood on a precipitous bluff from 30 to 40 feet above river-level on the western bank, and continued to its very edge. Directly under the bluff are the mangrove flats which extend to the river it-

self and which are about 120 feet wide. The roots of the mangroves here were covered at high tide and it was the influx of salt water that promoted the growth of the oysters on the roots. The mound is

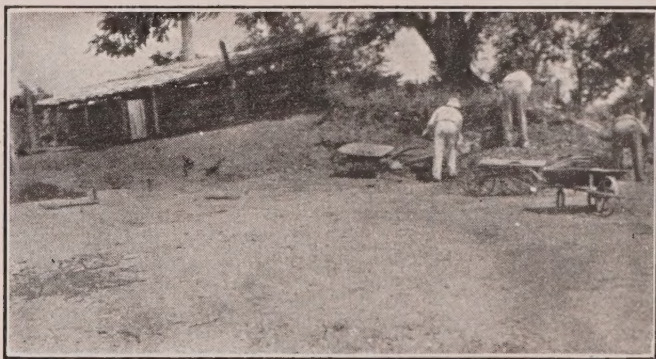


FIG. 3.—The mound after being leveled, showing sheep stables and large tree.

about three miles in a direct line from the mouth of the river. The lands along the eastern bank of the stream are low and flat, so that the aborigines of the village-site on the eastern bank had an excellent view over the river and the country to the eastward. On the mangrove flats directly under the bluff on which the mound is situated is a flowing



a

DEEP BOWLS

Height (*a*) $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. and (*b*) $5\frac{3}{8}$ in.

b

spring from which a considerable amount of fresh water issues at all seasons, and it is more than probable that the Indians procured their water supply here. This belief is further supported by what had the appearance of an artificial path, cut in the limestone bluff, leading down to the spring.

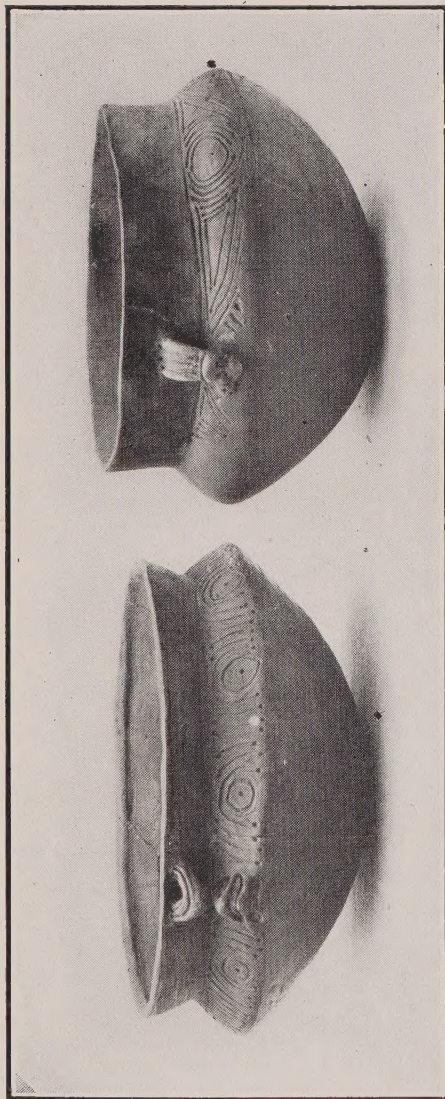
During the writer's stay on the Cristóbal Colón estate he investigated a number of other mounds on the property, all lying within a short distance of the river. These mounds are all near flowing springs of the same character as the one near the stables, but as they are in fields where sugar-cane had been planted at one time or another, it was considered best to confine the exploration to the mound that will be described. In addition to having been disturbed by cultivation, the other mounds have neither the extent nor the height of the one we excavated. The administrator's house on the estate also was situated upon a large mound lying about 200 yards due west of the one near the stables; this mound was originally

far higher and of greater extent than the one excavated, but being covered by the large dwelling and its out-buildings, we were unable to open it. From reports and from small test-holes the latter mound must have been exceptionally rich in aboriginal remains, and of the same character as the mound near the stables, that is, a combined burial-mound and kitchen-midden.

The skeletons unearthed were in very poor condition, crumbling at the slightest touch; indeed some of them were so decomposed that nothing remained of the teeth but the crowns. From the shape of such fragments as were sufficiently well preserved to enable examination, the skulls, like all other West Indian crania, had been artificially flattened.

KITCHEN-MIDDEN AND CEMETERY

The mound in which the excavation was conducted had not been cultivated, hence, with the exception of the uppermost layer of diluvial deposit, was in the same condition as when abandoned by



a

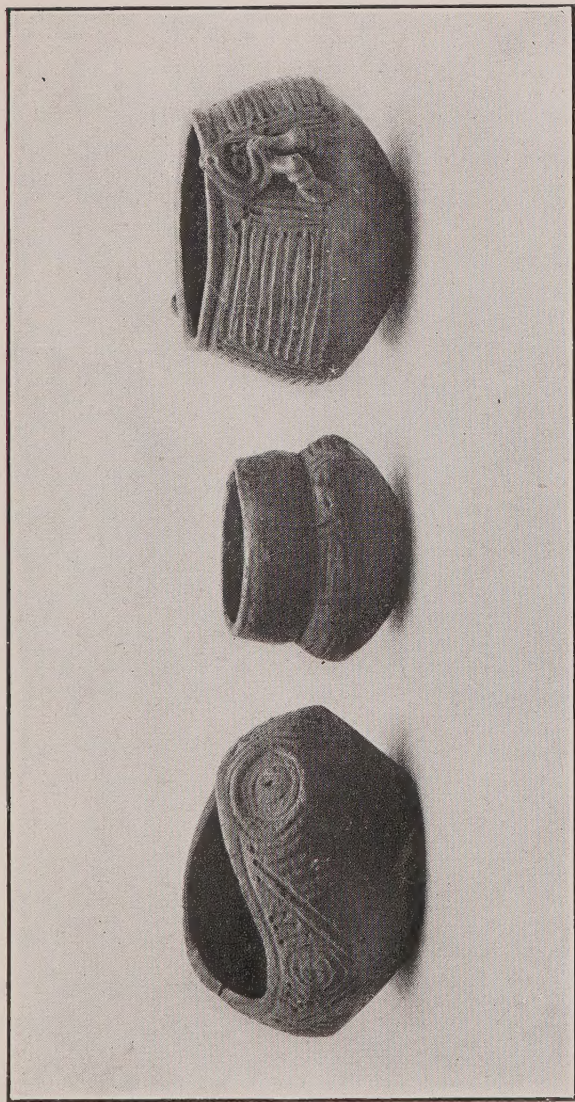
b

DEEP BOWLS

Height (*a*) $6\frac{1}{2}$ in. and (*b*) $7\frac{5}{8}$ in.

the aborigines. As may be seen by the plan (pl. 1), its greatest length was 188 feet and the greatest width 80 feet. Sheep stables covered part of the mound, and it was not possible to excavate under these. A large flamboyant tree (fig. 2) also prevented excavation beyond a certain limit, as its enormous roots impeded progress of the work and had broken all specimens in their vicinity. Some stables and a cement walk prevented the excavation of the southern limits of the mound. A small excavation was made north of the large tree, but as it was of scant depth here, the work was abandoned as being unprofitable. Judging from the size of the tree and from the extremely friable condition of the skeletons found, this particular mound is perhaps the oldest of those investigated on the island of Santo Domingo. It is to be regretted that the age of the flamboyant tree could not be determined, as it undoubtedly had sprouted after the village-site was abandoned, since shells and potsherds were found immediately beneath the trunk.

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	As may be seen by the plan, the largest excavation was made in about the center of the mound. This excavation was 63 feet square and extended from the edge of the bluff in a westerly direction to practically the limit of the mound. A line due north and south through the large tree indicated on the plan gives one the highest point of the mound, which was almost six feet. It will be noted that this crest-line does not divide the mound into two equal parts, and that the slope east of the crest in consequence was far steeper than the western slope. Owing to this fact the diluvial deposit formed but a scant covering on the eastern slope, as will be seen by the cross-section of the mound, shown on the plan. A good idea of the curve of this cross-section is afforded by the accompanying illustration (fig. 2), which exhibits the level surface after the excavation had been almost concluded, and in which the summit of the midden is easily discernible. The land not having been previously cultivated, excavation was a compara-
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a

b

c

EARTHENWARE VESSELS

Height (*a*) $3\frac{1}{4}$ in., (*b*) $2\frac{3}{4}$ in., and (*c*) $3\frac{1}{2}$ in.

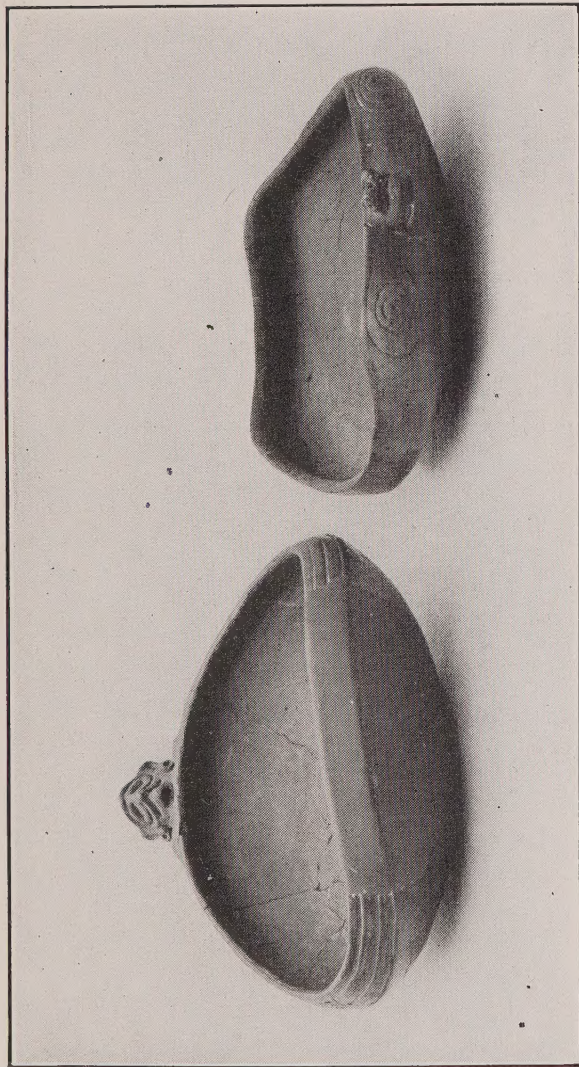
tively easy task. The uppermost diluvial deposit, varying from 3 to 18 inches, overgrown with grass and occasional small bushes, was fairly hard, but the deposits beneath presented no diffi-



FIG. 4.—The bluff on the edge of which the aboriginal mound was situated.

culties. Operations were commenced at the edge of the bluff, the removed earth being thrown over the rim (fig. 4). The houses shown at the left of the illustration are the two rooms east of the open stables indicated on the plan. By this illustra-

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	tion one may also gain a good idea of the size of the flamboyant tree, which is a prominent feature of the landscape. CONTENTS OF THE MIDDEN Commencing from the edge, the diluvial deposit was first removed, bringing to light the next deposit of shell and ash layers in which animal-bones, charcoal, ashes, and artifacts were found. This deposit did not differ materially from the kitchen-middens excavated by the writer on some of the other Antillean islands; it varied in depth from an inch to a foot, as may be observed by the cross-section. Close examination of fig. 2 will reveal a layer of small shells about three inches beneath the surface. About a foot under this layer was another, of larger shells, and an occasional shell may be observed between the two layers. One may also note the difference between the soil directly under the lower shell-layer as compared with the diluvial deposit above the layer of small shells, and the kitchen-midden stratum between the diluvial de-
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a

b

POTTERY BOWLS ORNAMENTED WITH GROTESQUE HEADS

Height (*a*) 5 in. and (*b*) $3\frac{7}{8}$ in.

posit and the soil under the deposit of large shells, a fact to which we shall call attention later.

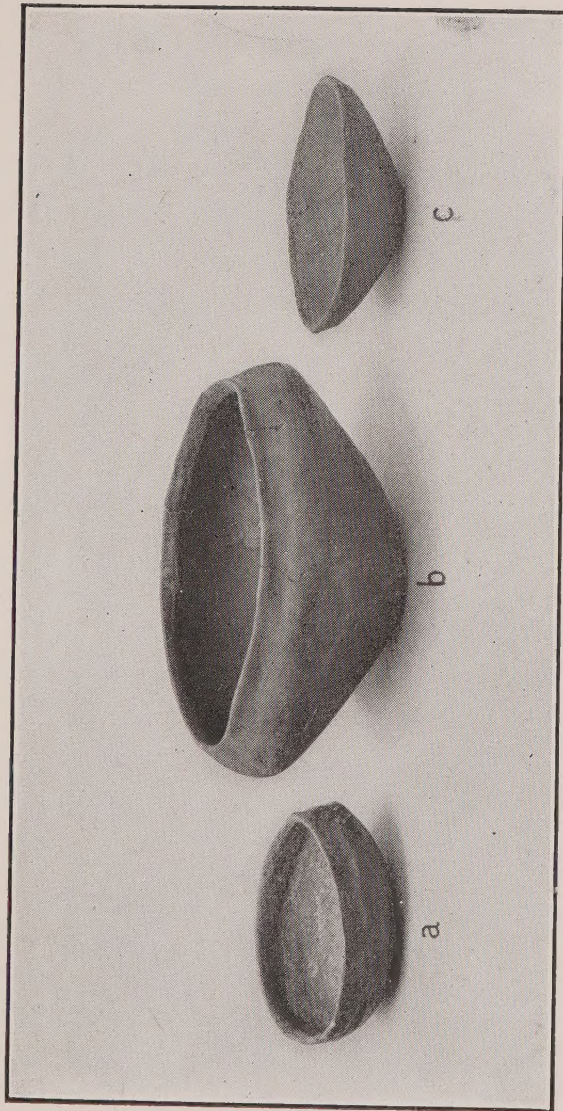
MARINE SHELLS

The usual kitchen-midden débris was found in this deposit under the diluvial deposit. Shells were found here in enormous quantities. We are indebted to the late Mr L. P. Gratacap, of the American Museum of Natural History, for their identification. It will be noted that the shells of *Ostrea virginica* were found in far greater quantities than any of the others, so that there can be no doubt that the aborigines made this mollusk their principal animal food, and probably established their village at this point in order to be near both the spring and the unfailing supply of oysters on the mangrove trees.

The identified shells were found to belong to the following species:

- Cstrea virginica* Gruelin (80%)
- Mytilus exustus* Linn. } (20%)
- Mytilus hamatus* Say }
- Arca (Scapharca) auriculata* Lam.

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	<i>Arca (Argina) pexata</i> Say <i>Perna obliqua</i> Lam. <i>Lucina tigrina</i> Linn. <i>Lucina jamaicensis</i> Linn. <i>Cardium muricatum</i> Linn. <i>Tagelus gibbus</i> Spengler <i>Murex brevifrons</i> Lam. <i>Purpura haemastoma</i> Linn. (variety) <i>Purpura patula</i> Linn. <i>Tritonium tritonis</i> Linn. <i>Cypraea exanthema</i> Linn. <i>Strombus gigas</i> Linn. <i>Strombus inermis</i> Swains. <i>Strombus pugilis</i> Linn. <i>Livona pica</i> Linn. <i>Modulus angulatus</i> C. C. Ads. LAND SHELLS <i>Helix (Caracolus) excellens</i> Pfr., and two fragmentary specimens of which the identification is not certain, but possibly being: <i>Helix (Thelidomus) aspera</i> Fer. <i>Liguus virgineus</i> Linn. It will be noted that the aborigines not only used shell-fish gathered directly from the river, but also went to the sea and scoured the country-side for their food supply.
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POTTERY BOWLS

Rim diameter : *a*, $5\frac{1}{8}$ in.; *b*, $8\frac{1}{2}$ in.; *c*, $5\frac{1}{2}$ in.

ANIMAL REMAINS

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MAMMAL BONES

The writer is indebted to Dr Gerrit S. Miller, jr., of the United States National Museum, for the identification of the mammal bones found in the mound. Dr Miller also kindly had identified the bones of other animals recovered from the deposit. In each case the authority is given in the following list.

The mammal bones are those of the following:

Trichechus sp. A manatee, or seacow. Dr Miller reports that he cannot positively identify the species, as the bones consist only of a rib and a caudal vertebra.

Isolobodon portoricensis. Of these rodents 207 bones, belonging to about 40 individuals, were represented. It may be concluded that the animal was extensively eaten by the aborigines, yet there is no record that it was found alive in post-Columbian times. Dr Miller reports that on the basis of this material he is unable to find any character by which to distinguish the Santo Domingo animal from that of Porto Rico.

Plagiodontia aedium. The utia, a rodent previously known from Santo Domingo and named by F. Cuvier in 1836. It was also found by W. M. Gabb in 1867-71 in a kitchen-midden

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in a cave near San Lorenzo bay, Santo Domingo. The writer obtained 15 bones of this animal, representing about 6 individuals. This is the only native rodent found alive in Santo Domingo since the discovery of the island by Europeans.

Brotomys voratus, gen. et spec. nov. An undescribed extinct species of *Loncheridae*, spiny rats, of which 21 bones were found, representing about 6 individuals.

— An animal of which only a femur was found in the remains preserved for identification. Dr Miller reports that it is apparently related to the last named, but was a much larger animal. He also states that it is useless to conjecture what animal it could have been.²

It will be observed from the foregoing that the writer was fortunate in securing in Santo Domingo the bones of four animals whose existence had hitherto been unreported from the waters or shores of that island. These comprise all of those mentioned above, with the exception of *Plagiodontia aedium*.

BIRD BONES

The bird bones found in the middens were identified by Dr R. W. Shufeldt, of Washington, as follows:



a
b

c

d
e



c
b

e

d
a

HANDLES OF EARTHENWARE VESSELS

BIRD BONES

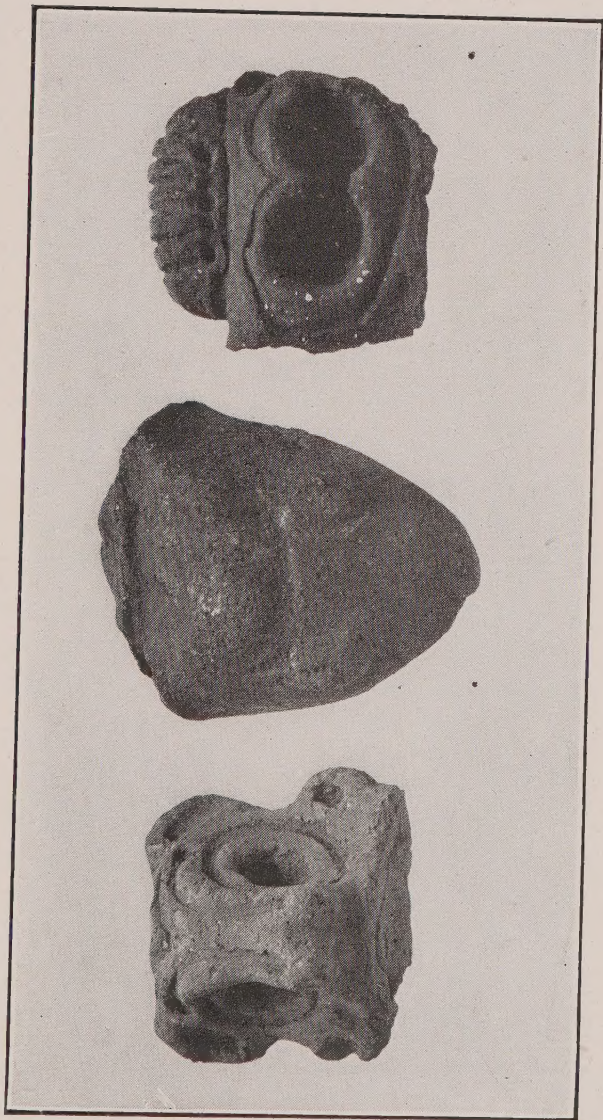
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Columba squamata (?). A large pigeon. Dr Shufeldt states that a humerus and a coracoid were found in the material and that these belonged to a large pigeon, possibly *Columba squamata*, a bird still in existence on the island of Santo Domingo.

Aramus sp. A species of courlan, smaller than *Aramus vociferus*, "although it may have been a subadult individual or even a female of that species. On the other hand, it may be a new species of that genus, in which case more material should be at hand to determine that point." Of this animal but a few bones (a humerus, etc.) were found in the material recovered from the kitchen-midden.

————— Possibly a species of the clapper rail. Dr Shufeldt reports the following: "There is quite a little collection of bones belonging apparently to two individuals, which I have compared with every possible form to which they might have belonged, either in the avifauna of the island or the off-lying mainlands, and they do not appear to have belonged to any existing species. The nearest thing to them is the Clapper Rail (*Rallus c. crepitans*) or some of its near allies in the same genus; very possibly they might have belonged to some rail of that size and kind, or, as a matter of fact, they might actually have belonged to a Clapper Rail of the size, or about the size, of *R. c. crepitans*."

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	FISH BONES Of the fish bones found, the following species were determined by Mr Barton A. Bean, of the United States National Museum: <i>Epinephelus</i> sp. Grouper. <i>Sphyraena</i> sp. Barracouta. <i>Carangus</i> sp. Crevallé. <i>Diodon</i> sp. Porcupine fish. ——— A species of shark. ——— A species of carangoid fish. OTHER ANIMAL REMAINS In addition to the mammals, birds, and fishes enumerated, the material contained a few bones of a species of iguana. Dr L. Stejneger, of the National Museum, who made the identification, was not willing to attempt an exact determination on the basis of the few bones procured. The material furthermore included a claw of the common light-colored land-crab (<i>Cardisoma guanhumi</i>), identified by Miss Mary Rathbun, of the National Museum. Only an occasional crab carapace was found in the kitchen-midden deposit. The mangrove flats under the
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HANDLES OF EARTHENWARE VESSELS

bluff upon which the mound is situated swarmed with crabs, which at the present time are regarded as a delicacy by the West Indian negroes, hence the writer cannot account for the seeming indifference of the aborigines to this food.

EARLY ANIMAL LIFE

Dr Miller was kind enough to call the writer's attention to the important conclusions that might be drawn by zoölogists from the remains of animals found in pre-Columbian kitchen-middens of the West Indies. Discoveries of this kind might have an important bearing on the zoölogical history of the Antilles, especially where mainland animals are found to have existed upon the islands.

To a casual observer it might seem as if the extermination of the mammals enumerated above was due to the activities of the pre-Columbian inhabitants of Santo Domingo, but the writer is inclined to believe that this cannot have been the case. It is a well-known fact, mentioned by a number of the early his-

torians, that certain animals were considered of such delicacy that their flesh was reserved solely for consumption by the caciques, hence it is not likely that they were recklessly exterminated. Moreover, one must consider the fact that the Indians had no means of hunting game other than with bow and arrow, the spear, and possibly with snares. It does not seem probable that animals in a tropical country, with its forests and consequently favorable shelter, could be exterminated by such primitive means. It may be concluded, therefore, that the Spaniards with their firearms, and not the Indians, were more directly responsible for the extinction of the indigenous animal life. A mere glance at any history of Santo Domingo will convince one that the Spaniards, rather than devote their time and that of their Indian slaves to the cultivation of foodstuffs, were in constant search of gold during the first twenty years of their occupancy of the island; as a result, they frequently suffered from severe food shortage, and



PORTIONS OF POTTERY RIMS SHOWING GROTESQUE ORNAMENTS

ASHES AND PEBBLES	127
more than likely relentlessly hunted all animals found fit for consumption. OTHER MIDDEN DEPOSITS Unlike some of the other West Indian kitchen-middens, ashes were not found in regular layers, but were in pockets, as if the aborigines made their fires in circular depressions rather than on the slopes surrounding their abodes. Furthermore, with few exceptions these ash-pockets were unaccompanied with the stones upon which the pre-Columbian inhabitants placed their cooking-pots. Quantities of charcoal were found with the ashes, and once or twice a considerable number of large pieces of charcoal were uncovered, several of them showing evidence that the wood had been cut with primitive implements. An occasional cache of small river pebbles was found in the kitchen-midden deposit, but no explanation of this occurrence can be offered. The pebbles were too small to have been used as rubbing or smoothing stones, and they were not	
AND MONOGRAPHS	2

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27	sufficiently symmetrical to suggest their use in games. A cache of seven square pestle stones was also found. Furthermore, a considerable number of broken stalactites was unearthed from the midden, evidently brought by the aborigines to their village from some distant cave. An occasional piece of madreporé coral was also encountered. A selection of the artifacts found in the kitchen-midden deposit is illustrated herein. It may be of interest to note that not a single object was found in the mound to indicate that its inhabitants had lived there after the Spanish occupancy. INTERMENTS Directly beneath the kitchen-midden deposit was found a mound of black earth, which formed the noteworthy feature of the aboriginal site. There can be no doubt that this mound was of artificial origin and was reared by the aborigines on the level surface of the bluff. It was in this mound that all the burials
I	INDIAN NOTES



· PORTIONS OF POTTERY VESSELS SHOWING GRO-
TESQUE ORNAMENTS

were found: in no instance were skeletal remains encountered in the kitchen-midden deposit covering the mound.

The interments were of the class known as "bundle-burials." The aborigines of the West Indies had various methods of disposing of their dead. A dying person was frequently placed in a hammock at some distance from the village and there allowed to expire, his relatives leaving a four-days supply of food and drink within easy reach.³ While this custom was in force among the inhabitants of the peninsula of Paria, it may also have been employed in Hayti. The bones were probably collected after the body had decomposed, and were then deposited either in caves or interred. Román Pane tells of a Haytian superstition regarding the universal deluge in which a chief slew his son, collected the bones, and preserved them in a gourd, "as was the custom of the natives with the relics of their friends."⁴ The writer has personally investigated various burial caves in Cuba, Jamaica, and Santo Domingo, in which

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	numerous bundle-burials had been placed. It has been suggested that it was not an uncommon custom of the West Indians to deposit the body of the departed in a river until the fish and crabs had consumed the flesh, when the bones were gathered and buried.  a b FIG. 5.—Small pottery bowls. (Height, (a) $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. and (b) $6\frac{1}{8}$ in.) From the fact that the bones were frequently covered with a quantity of kitchen-midden débris, it may be assumed that the mound was not reared for the sole purpose of providing a place of burial, but rather was designed as an elevation on which to build the abodes, and that burials were made therein while the
I	INDIAN NOTES



GROTESQUE ORNAMENTS FROM RIMS OF POTTERY VESSELS

mound was inhabited. The occupants seem to have dug a hole near their dwellings, or possibly in the floor, and placed in this the bones of their dead; the grave was then filled with the earth and refuse from the excavation, which accounts for the shells, ashes, charcoal, and potsherds covering the skeletons. Had the mound been used primarily as a cemetery and later as a village-site, the burials would have been found in the black earth of the lowermost deposit, and would have been covered therewith, rather than with the débris of the midden.

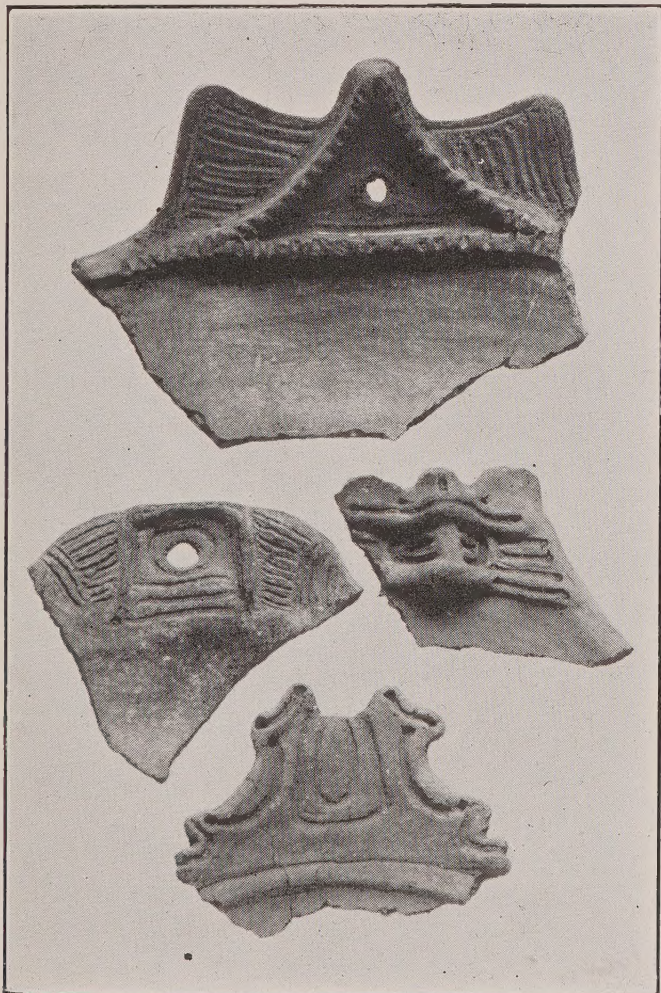
After digging the hole in the black earth in which the bones were placed,—a hole not more than three feet in diameter and about two feet deep,—the bones were deposited in the excavation without order and the skull was placed on top of them. This method of burial was found to have been followed in each of the twenty-one graves found. In many instances the skulls faced eastward, or toward the river, but often it was impossible to determine the orientation, owing to

the decayed state of the bones. It is certain, however, that six of the skulls faced the east, and probably four others were similarly directed.

Of the twenty-one burials uncovered (see pl. I), seventeen were of adults and four of children. Of the former, six burials were without pottery vessels or other artifacts. One of the burials of children also was devoid of accompaniments. The remaining eleven adult burials and three burials of children were accompanied with earthenware vessels.

Nine adult burials and two burials of children were covered with pottery vessels of the types herein illustrated. These were inverted over the skulls, partially or wholly covering the bones beneath. In some instances the vessel was so large that it hid the entire bundle-burial; in other cases it covered only the skull and rested on the other bones.

The skulls of the remaining two adult burials and the child burial not only were covered in each case with a large vessel, but were accompanied with a small food-



PARTS OF RIMS OF EARTHENWARE VESSELS

bowl nearby. Examples of these small bowls are also illustrated (pl. VI, *a*, *c*).

In no instance had the mortuary vessels been "killed" by puncturing or breaking, and, unlike burials in other



FIG. 6.—Earthenware jar. (Height $6\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

parts of the New World, no personal ornaments, such as gorgets and amulets, and no weapons of any kind were in association. This is all the more strange, as the aborigines of Santo Domingo are

known to have possessed ornaments of fine workmanship, numbers of which may be seen in the Antillean collections of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation. The bone pendant illus-



FIG. 7.—Bone pendant.

trated in fig. 7 was found in the refuse of the midden. It may well be, of course, that if the remains of the dead were deposited in the river as above described, the ornaments were not gathered with the separated bones. On the other hand, no explanation can be offered as to the absence of weapons, nor why in some in-

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PL. XV



“ ELBOW STONE ” FOUND IN THE MIDDEN REFUSE (LENGTH $10\frac{3}{4}$ INCHES)

stances small food-bowls were found with some burials while others were devoid of accompaniments.

Only one burial, that of an adult, was accompanied with an artifact in addition

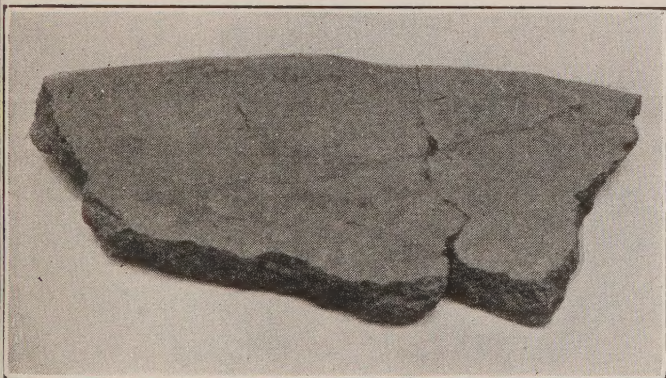


FIG. 8.—Fragment of a cooking slab. (Length, 13 in.; width (max.) $8\frac{1}{4}$ in.)

to a pottery bowl; in this case, with the skull, under the large vessel, were two conch-shells. This burial did not have a small food-bowl, hence it is not improbable that the conchs served the same purpose as earthenware receptacles.

Mr Despaigne gave information of a burial found a number of years ago dur-

ing excavation for the foundation of the residence built upon the mound previously mentioned, where the long-bones of a skeleton had been placed in a large pottery vessel and the skull in a smaller

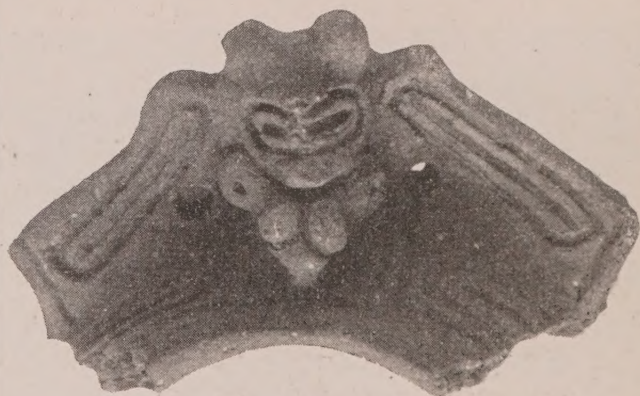


FIG. 9.—Part of a rim showing grotesque figure.

bowl. It was not the writer's good fortune to encounter a burial of this kind.

It has been noted that most of the burials were found near the edge of the bluff. We are not prepared to state whether or not this is a coincidence, but the occurrence may be due to the fact that the artificial mound was of greater height near the edge of the declivity.

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